

CHAP. II.

1567 - 1569.

From Mary's Marriage with Bothwell, to the Election of the Regent Murray.

 CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

<i>England.</i>	<i>France.</i>	<i>Germany.</i>	<i>Spain.</i>	<i>Portugal.</i>	<i>Pope.</i>
Elizabeth.	Charles IX.	Maximilian II.	Philip II.	Sebastian.	Pius V.

It was not to be expected that the late appalling events would be regarded with indifference by the people, the reformed clergy, or the more honest part of the nobility. Bothwell was universally reputed the principal murderer of the king; he was now the husband of their sovereign, and it was commonly reported that he had already laid his schemes to get possession of the young prince, who was kept at Stirling Castle, under the governance of the Earl of Mar. Nor are we to wonder if men even looked with suspicion to the future conduct of the queen herself. She had apparently surrendered her mind to the dominion of a passion which rendered her deaf to every suggestion of delicacy and prudence, almost of virtue. She had refused to listen to the entreaties and arguments of her

best friends, to Lord Herries, who, on his knees implored her not to marry the duke; to de Croc, the French ambassador, who urged the same request; to Beaton, her own ambassador; to Sir James Melvil, whose remonstrances against Bothwell nearly cost him his life.¹ In the face of all this she had precipitated her marriage with this daring and wicked man; and public rumour still accused her of being a party to the murder. Of this last atrocious imputation, indeed, no direct proof was yet brought or offered; but even if we dismiss it as absolutely false, was any mother who acted such a part worthy to be entrusted with the keeping and education of the heir to the throne?

So deeply felt were these considerations, that, as we have seen, a coalition for the destruction of Bothwell, and the preservation of the prince, was now widely organised in Scotland. Of this confederacy Lethington was secretly a member, although he still remained at Dunbar with the queen. Becoming suspected by Bothwell, however, this baron and his associate Huntly had resolved on his death, when Mary threw herself between them, and declared that if a hair of his head perished, it should be at the peril of their life and lands. Thus preserved, he continued his intrigues, and only waited a favourable opportunity to make his escape and join his friends.² The plans

¹ Melvil's Memoirs, pp. 176, 177.

² MS. Letter, St. P. Off. B. C. Drury to Cecil, 6 May, 1567. Melvil's Memoirs, p. 178.

of the associated lords had been communicated to Murray, then in France; they were sure to meet with the sanction of the Reformed Church, and the sympathy of the people. France encouraged them; and Robert Melvil and Grange, two leading men in the confederacy, had informed Cecil and Elizabeth of their intentions. Her answer was now anxiously expected.

But this princess, at all times jealous of the royal prerogative, was startled when she understood that the combined lords had not only resolved to prosecute Bothwell for the murder, and to rescue the queen from his thralldom but to crown the prince.¹ In reply to the picture they drew of the violent restraint put upon their sovereign, she informed them, that if Mary's own letters to herself were to be trusted, she was in no thralldom, but had consented to all that had happened; she observed that "to crown her son during his mother's life was a matter for example's sake not to be digested by her or any other monarch;" but she added, that if they would deliver the young prince into her hands to be kept in England, she felt inclined to support them. In the mean time the Earl of Bedford was ordered to hasten northward, that he might have an eye on their² movements and afford them some encouragement, whilst Cecil her indefatigable minister had so craftily laid his spies about the court that he received in-

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off. B. C. Drury to Cecil, 6 May, 1567.

² MS. Letter, St. P. Off. B. C. Bedford to Cecil, 11th May, 1567, and Copy, Elizabeth to Bedford, 17 May, 1567.

